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It has been the privilege of my life to serve as the leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party. The almost eight years I've spent at the helm have coincided with one of the most remarkable and important periods of recent Scottish political history. I am proud of the teams we have built in Holyrood, Westminster and in council chambers across the country and proud of our electoral successes in recent years. All of that pales in significance compared to vital role our party undertook in the Scottish independence referendum of 2014. I will always consider that the most important contribution of my working life and my commitment to keeping the United Kingdom together remains undimmed.

None of the achievements mentioned above would have been possible without your support, guidance and friendship - along with the hard work and professionalism of the Scottish Conservative team at central office. For all of this, thank you.

Inevitably, much has changed over the years of my leadership - both personally and in the wider political context. While I have not hidden the conflict I have felt over Brexit, I have attempted to chart a course for our party which recognises and respects the referendum result, while seeking to maximise opportunities and mitigate risks for key Scottish businesses and sectors. I hope and believe that industries as diverse as our fishing fleets and whisky producers have felt well represented by the Scottish Conservatives during this time.

The biggest change, of course, has been starting a family. I cannot thank you, Jackson Carlaw and the wider party enough for the generosity and support you have all shown to Jen and me following the birth of baby Finn. It made my return to work in April as smooth as I could have hoped and I believe the flexibility shown by colleagues has allowed me these last months to continue operating successfully in my role as leader.

However, as I look to the future, I see the Scottish Election due in 2021 and a credible threat from our opponents to force a general election before then. Having led our party through seven national

elections and two referenda, I know the efforts, hours and travel required to fight such campaigns successfully. I have to be honest that where the idea of getting on the road to fight two elections in 20 months would once have fired me up, the threat of spending hundreds of hours away from my home and family now fills me with dread. That is no way to lead.

Additionally, I fear that having tried to be a good leader over the years, I have proved a poor daughter, sister, partner and friend. The party and my work has always come first, often at the expense of commitments to loved ones. The arrival of my son means I now make a different choice. While I offer you my resignation as party leader, I intend to continue in my role as the MSP for Edinburgh Central until 2021. I will always be thankful for the opportunity to serve and to the amazing teams I have worked alongside. Be assured I will continue to support the party, the Prime Minister and Scotland's place in the United Kingdom from the backbenches and beyond.

Yours sincerely,



RUTH DAVIDSON MSP